

**FUEL-FIRED HEATING APPLIANCE WITH COMBUSTION AIR SHUTOFF
SYSTEM HAVING FRANGIBLE TEMPERATURE SENSING STRUCTURE**

5

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation-in-part of copending U.S.
10 application serial no. 09/801,551 filed on March 8, 2001 and entitled "FUEL-
FIRED HEATING APPLIANCE WITH COMBUSTION CHAMBER TEMPERATURE-
SENSING COMBUSTION AIR SHUTOFF SYSTEM", the full disclosure of such
copending application being hereby incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

15 The present invention generally relates to fuel-fired heating
appliances and, in a preferred embodiment thereof, more particularly
provides a gas-fired water heater having incorporated therein a specially
designed combustion air shutoff system.

Gas-fired residential and commercial water heaters are generally
20 formed to include a vertical cylindrical water storage tank with a gas
burner disposed in a combustion chamber below the tank. The burner is
supplied with a fuel gas through a gas supply line, and combustion air
through an air inlet flow path providing communication between the
exterior of the water heater and the interior of the combustion chamber.

25 Water heaters of this general type are extremely safe and quite
reliable in operation. However, under certain operational conditions the
temperature and carbon monoxide levels within the combustion chamber

may begin to rise toward undesirable magnitudes. Accordingly, it would be desirable, from an improved overall control standpoint, to incorporate in this type of fuel-fired water heater a system for sensing these operational conditions and responsively terminating the firing of the
5 water heater. It is to this goal that the present invention is directed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In carrying out principles of the present invention, in accordance with a preferred embodiment thereof, fuel-fired heating apparatus is provided which is representatively in the form of a gas-fired water heater
10 and includes a combustion chamber thermally communicatable with a fluid to be heated, and a burner structure associated with the combustion chamber and operative to receive fuel from a source thereof. A wall structure defines a flow path through which combustion air may flow into the combustion chamber for mixture and combustion with fuel received
15 by the burner structure to create hot combustion products within the combustion chamber.

The water heater also incorporates therein a specially designed combustion air shutoff system, operative in response to an increased combustion temperature within the combustion chamber created by a
20 reduction in the quantity of combustion air entering the combustion chamber via the flow path (caused, for example, by a progressive clogging of the flow path), for terminating combustion air supply to the combustion chamber, to thus terminate firing of the burner structure, prior to the creation in the combustion chamber of a predetermined
25 elevated concentration of carbon monoxide therein. Representatively, this predetermined elevated concentration of carbon monoxide is in the range of from about 200ppm to about 400ppm by volume.

According to one aspect of the invention in a preferred embodiment thereof, the burner structure is disposed within the combustion chamber, a bottom wall of the combustion chamber is defined by an arrestor plate having a perforated portion defined by a series of flame quenching openings extending through the plate, and the combustion air shutoff system includes a heat-frangible temperature sensing structure extending through the arrestor plate into the interior of the combustion chamber, preferably adjacent the burner structure therein. The temperature sensing structure functions to sense a predetermined, undesirably elevated combustion temperature within the combustion chamber, which may be caused by a reduction in the quantity of air being delivered to the combustion chamber via the flow path, or by burning in the combustion chamber of extraneous flammable vapor which has entered its interior through the arrestor plate flame quenching openings, and responsively activate the balance of the combustion air shutoff system to terminate further air inflow into the combustion chamber.

In a preferred embodiment thereof, the temperature sensing structure includes a base frame member having a base wall secured to the inner side of the arrestor plate and having an opening extending therethrough which is aligned with a corresponding rod opening in the arrestor plate. A support frame member is releasably secured to the base frame member, preferably by a twist lock interconnection therebetween, and has spaced apart opposing first and second wall portions, the first wall portion having an opening therewith which overlies the base wall opening of the base frame member.

A heat-frangible element, preferably a fluid-filled glass bulb, is releasably carried by the support frame member and bears against its

second wall portion. A spring member releasably interposed between the first wall portion of the support frame member resiliently holds the heat-frangible element against the second wall portion of the support frame member, and overlies and blocks the opening in the first wall portion.

5 Representatively, the fluid within the fluid-filled glass bulb may be peanut oil, mineral oil or an assembly lubricant such as Proeco 46 assembly lubricant as manufactured and sold by Cognis Corporation, 8150 Holton Drive, Florence, Kentucky 41042. Other suitable fluids could alternatively be utilized if desired.

10 An open-topped pan structure is supported beneath the arrestor plate and has a bottom wall opening beneath which a shutoff damper is supported in an open position, and is resiliently biased upwardly toward a closed position in which the damper shuts off combustion air flow to the combustion chamber. The temperature sensing structure includes a rod
15 having a first end portion anchored to the damper for movement therewith, and a second end portion extending upwardly through the arrestor plate rod opening and the overlying openings in the base wall of the base frame member and the first wall portion of the support frame member and resiliently bearing against the spring member carried by the
20 support frame member.

 The rod is thus prevented from upward movement by the frame spring and frangible element and in turn blocks the damper from moving upwardly toward its closed position. When the set point temperature of the temperature sensing structure is reached within the combustion
25 chamber, the frangible element shatters, thereby freeing the rod for upward movement through the base frame/support frame structure. This, in turn, permits the upwardly biased damper to be forced upwardly to its

closed position, with the frame spring member being ejected from the overall frame structure by the upwardly moving rod.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a simplified partial cross-sectional view through a bottom
5 portion of a representative gas-fired water heater having incorporated therein a specially designed combustion air shutoff system embodying principles of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlargement of the dashed area "2" in FIG. 1 and illustrates the operation of a control damper portion of the combustion air shutoff
10 system;

FIG. 3 is a simplified, reduced scale top plan view of an arrestor plate portion of the water heater that forms the bottom wall of its combustion chamber;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged scale cross-sectional view, taken along line 4-4 of
15 FIG. 1, through a specially designed eutectic temperature sensing structure incorporated in the combustion air shutoff system and projecting into the combustion chamber of the water heater;

FIG. 4A is a cross-sectional view through a first alternate embodiment of the eutectic temperature sensing structure shown in FIG. 4;

20 FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a specially designed bottom jacket pan which may be utilized in the water heater;

FIG. 6 is a side elevational view of the bottom jacket pan;

FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view through the bottom jacket pan taken along line 7-7 of FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is an enlargement of the circled area "8" in FIG. 7 and illustrates a portion of an annular, jacket edge-receiving support groove extending around the open top end of the bottom jacket pan;

5 FIG. 9 is a simplified partial cross-sectional view through a bottom end portion of a first alternate embodiment of the FIG. 1 water heater incorporating therein the bottom jacket pan shown in FIGS. 5-8;

FIG. 10 is a cross-sectional view through an upper end portion of a second alternate embodiment of the eutectic temperature sensing structure shown in FIG. 4;

10 FIG. 11 is a cross-sectional view through an upper end portion of a third alternate embodiment of the eutectic temperature sensing structure shown in FIG. 4;

FIG. 12 is a cross-sectional view through an upper end portion of a fourth alternate embodiment of the eutectic temperature sensing structure shown in FIG. 4;

15 FIG. 13 is a simplified perspective view of a bottom end portion of a second embodiment of the FIG. 1 water heater;

FIG. 14 is an enlarged scale outer side perspective view of a molded plastic snap-in combustion air pre-filter structure incorporated in the FIG. 13 water heater;

FIG. 15 is an inner side perspective view of the molded plastic pre-filter structure;

FIG. 16 is an inner side elevational view of the molded plastic pre-filter structure operatively installed in the FIG. 13 water heater;

25 FIG. 17 is an enlarged cross-sectional view through the molded plastic pre-filter structure taken along line 17-17 of FIG. 16;

FIG. 18 is an enlarged cross-sectional view through the molded plastic pre-filter structure taken along line 18-18 of FIG. 16;

FIG. 19 is a view similar to that in FIG. 2 but illustrating a heat-frangible temperature sensing structure in place of the eutectic-based temperature sensing structure shown in FIG. 2;

5 FIG. 20 is an enlargement of the dashed area "A" in FIG. 19 and illustrates an upper portion of the heat-frangible temperature sensing structure in a pre-activation orientation;

FIG. 20A is a view similar to that in FIG. 20, but with the heat-frangible temperature structure in a post-activation orientation;

10 FIG. 21 is an enlarged scale perspective view of a fluid-filled glass bulb portion of the heat-frangible temperature sensing structure;

FIG. 22 is an enlarged scale perspective view of a support frame portion of the heat-frangible temperature sensing structure;

FIG. 23 is an enlarged scale perspective view of a spring portion of the heat-frangible temperature sensing structure;

15 FIG. 24 is an enlarged scale partially exploded perspective view of an upper end portion of the heat-frangible temperature sensing structure illustrating its installation on the combustion chamber arrestor plate of a gas-fired water heater; and

20 FIG. 25 is a side elevational view of a portion of the heat-frangible temperature sensing structure taken along line 25-25 of FIG. 24.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As illustrated in simplified, somewhat schematic form in FIGS. 1 and 2, in a representative embodiment thereof this invention provides a gas-fired water heater 10 having a vertically oriented cylindrical metal tank 12 adapted to hold a quantity of water 14 to be heated and delivered on demand to one or more hot water-using fixtures, such as sinks, bathtubs, showers, dishwashers and the like. An upwardly domed bottom head

25

structure 16 having an open lower side portion 17 forms a lower end wall of the tank 12 and further defines the top wall of a combustion chamber 18 at the lower end of the tank 12. An annular metal skirt 20 extends downwardly from the periphery of the bottom head 16 to the lower end 22 of the water heater 10 and forms an annular outer side wall portion of the combustion chamber 18. An open upper end portion of the skirt 20 is press-fitted into the lower side portion 17 of the bottom head structure 16, and the closed lower end 27 of the skirt structure 20 downwardly extends to the bottom end 22 of the water heater 10.

The bottom wall of the combustion chamber 18 is defined by a specially designed circular arrestor plate 24 having a peripheral edge portion received and captively retained in an annular roll-formed crimp area 26 of the skirt upwardly spaced apart from its lower end 27. As best illustrated in FIG. 3, the circular arrestor plate 24 has a centrally disposed square perforated area 28 having formed therethrough a spaced series of flame arrestor or flame "quenching" openings 30 which are configured and arranged to permit combustion air and extraneous flammable vapors to flow upwardly into the combustion chamber 18, as later described herein, but substantially preclude the downward travel of combustion chamber flames therethrough. These arrestor plate openings 30 function similarly to the arrestor plate openings illustrated and described in U.S. Patent 6,035,812 to Harrigill et al which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. Illustratively, the metal arrestor plate 24 is 1/16" thick, the arrestor plate openings 30 are 1/16" circular openings, and the center-to-center spacing of the openings 30 is 1/8".

A gas burner 32 is centrally disposed on a bottom interior side portion of the combustion chamber 18. Burner 32 is supplied with gas via a main gas supply pipe 34 (see FIG. 1) that extends into the interior of the

combustion chamber 18 through a suitable access door 36 secured over an opening 38 formed in a subsequently described outer sidewall portion of the water heater 10. A conventional pilot burner 40 and associated piezo igniter structure 42 are suitably supported in the interior of the combustion chamber 18, with the pilot burner 40 being supplied with gas via a pilot supply pipe 44 extending inwardly through access door 36. Pilot burner and thermocouple electrical wires 46,48 extend inwardly through a pass-through tube 50 into the combustion chamber interior and are respectively connected to the pilot burner 40 and piezo igniter structure 42.

Burner 32 is operative to create within the combustion chamber 18 a generally upwardly directed flame 52 (as indicated in solid line form in FIG. 2) and resulting hot combustion products. During firing of the water heater 10, the hot combustion products flow upwardly through a flue structure 54 (see FIG. 1) that is connected at its lower end to the bottom head structure 16, communicates with the interior of the combustion chamber 18, and extends upwardly through a central portion of the tank 12. Heat from the upwardly traveling combustion products is transferred to the water 14 to heat it.

Extending beneath and parallel to the arrestor plate 24 is a horizontal damper pan 56 having a circular top side peripheral flange 58 and a bottom side wall 60 having an air inlet opening 62 disposed therein. Bottom side wall 60 is spaced upwardly apart from the bottom end 22 of the water heater 10, and the peripheral flange 58 is captively retained in the roll-crimped area 26 of the skirt 20 beneath the peripheral portion of the arrestor plate 24. The interior of the damper pan 56 defines with the arrestor plate 24 an air inlet plenum 64 that communicates with the combustion chamber 18 via the openings 30 in the arrestor plate 24.

Disposed beneath the bottom pan wall 60 is another plenum 66 horizontally circumscribed by a lower end portion of the skirt 20 having a circumferentially spaced series of openings 68 therein.

The outer side periphery of the water heater 10 is defined by an annular metal jacket 70 which is spaced outwardly from the vertical side wall of the tank 12 and defines therewith an annular cavity 72 (see FIG. 1) which is filled with a suitable insulation material 74 down to a point 80 somewhat above the lower side of the bottom head 16. Beneath this point the cavity 72 has an empty portion 76 that extends outwardly around the skirt 20. A pre-filter screen area 78, having a series of air pre-filtering inlet openings 79 therein, is positioned in a lower end portion of the jacket 70, beneath the bottom end 80 of the insulation 74, and communicates the exterior of the water heater 10 with the empty cavity portion 76. Representatively, the screen area 78 is a structure separate from the jacket 70 and is removably secured in a corresponding opening therein. Illustratively, the pre-filter screen area 78 may be of an expanded metal mesh type formed of 3/16" carbon steel in a #22F diamond opening pattern having approximately 55% open area, or could be a metal panel structure having perforations separately formed therein. Alternatively, the openings 79 may be formed directly in the jacket 70. As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, a lower end portion 82 of the jacket 70 is received within a shallow metal bottom pan structure 84 that defines, with its bottom side, the bottom end 22 of the water heater 10.

Water heater 10 incorporates therein a specially designed combustion air shutoff system 86 which, under certain circumstances later described herein, automatically functions to terminate combustion air supply to the combustion chamber 18 via a flow path extending inwardly from the jacket openings 79 to the arrestor plate openings 30. The

combustion air shutoff system 86 includes a circular damper plate member 88 that is disposed in the plenum 66 beneath the bottom pan wall opening 62 and has a raised central portion 90. A coiled spring member 92 is disposed within the interior of the raised central portion 90 and is compressed between its upper end and the bottom end 94 of a bracket 96 (see FIG. 2) secured at its top end to the underside of the bottom pan wall 60.

The lower end of a solid cylindrical metal rod portion 98 of a fusible link temperature sensing structure 100 extends downwardly into the raised portion 90, through a suitable opening in its upper end. An annular lower end ledge 102 (see FIG. 2) on the rod 98 prevents the balance of the rod 98 from moving downwardly into the interior of the raised damper member portion 90. Just above the ledge 68¹⁰² (see FIG. 2) are diametrically opposite, radially outwardly extending projections 104 formed on the rod 98. During normal operation of the water heater 10, the damper plate member 88 is held in its solid line position by the rod 98, as shown in FIG. 2, in which the damper plate 88 is downwardly offset from and uncovers the bottom pan wall opening 62, with the spring 92 resiliently biasing the damper plate member 88 upwardly toward the bottom pan wall opening 62. When the fusible link temperature sensing structure 100 is thermally tripped, as later described herein, it permits the spring 92 to upwardly drive the damper plate member 88 to its dotted line closed position (see FIG. 2), as indicated by the arrows 106 in FIG. 2, in which the damper plate member 88 engages the bottom pan wall 60 and closes off the opening 62 therein, thereby terminating further air flow into the combustion chamber 18 as later described herein.

Turning now to FIGS. 2 and 4, it can be seen that the temperature sensing structure 100 projects upwardly into the combustion chamber 18

through the perforated square central area 28 of the arrestor plate 24. An upper end portion of the rod 98 is slidably received in a crimped tubular collar member 108 that longitudinally extends upwardly through an opening 110 in the central square perforated portion 28 of the arrestor plate 24 into the interior of the combustion chamber 18, preferably horizontally adjacent a peripheral portion of the gas burner 32. The lower end of the tubular collar 108 is outwardly flared, as at 112, to keep the collar 108 from moving from its FIG. 2 position into the interior of the combustion chamber 18. Above its flared lower end portion 112 the collar has two radially inwardly projecting annular crimps formed therein - an upper crimp 114 adjacent the open upper end of the collar, and a lower crimp 116 adjacent the open lower end of the collar. These crimps serve to guide the rod 98 within the collar 108 to keep the rod from binding therein when it is spring-driven upwardly through the collar 108 as later described herein.

A thin metal disc member 118, having a diameter somewhat greater than the outer diameter of the rod and greater than the inner diameter of the upper annular crimp 114, is slidably received within the open upper end of the collar 108, just above the upper crimp 114, and underlies a meltable disc 120, formed from a suitable eutectic material, which is received in the open upper end of the collar 108 and fused to its interior side surface. The force of the damper spring 92 (see FIG. 2) causes the upper end of the rod 98 to forcibly bear upwardly against the underside of the disc 118, with the unmelted eutectic disc 120 preventing upward movement of the disc 118 away from its FIG. 4 position within the collar 108. When the eutectic disc 120 is melted, as later described herein, the upper end of the rod 98, and the disc 118, are driven by the spring 92 upwardly through the upper end of the collar 108 (as indicated by the

dotted line position of the rod 98 shown in FIG. 2) as the damper plate 88 is also spring-driven upwardly to its dotted line closed position shown in FIG. 2.

A first alternate embodiment 100a of the eutectic temperature sensing structure 100 partially illustrated in FIG. 4 is shown in FIG. 4A. For ease in comparison between the temperature sensing structures 100, 100a components in the temperature sensing structure 100a similar to those in the temperature sensing structure 100 have been given identical reference numerals with the subscript "a". The eutectic temperature sensing structure 100a is substantially identical in operation to the temperature sensing structure 100, but is structurally different in that in the temperature sensing structure 100a the solid metal rod 98 is replaced with a hollow tubular metal rod 122, and the separate metal disc 118 is replaced with a laterally enlarged, integral crimped circular upper end portion 124 of the hollow rod 122 that underlies and forcibly bears upwardly against the underside of the eutectic disc 120a.

During firing of the water heater 10, ambient combustion air 126 (see FIG. 2) is sequentially drawn inwardly through the openings 79 in the jacket-disposed pre-filter screen area 78 into the empty cavity portion 76, into the plenum 66 via the skirt openings 68, upwardly through the bottom pan wall opening 62 into the plenum 64, and into the combustion chamber 18 via the arrestor plate openings 30 to serve as combustion air for the burner 32.

In the water heater 10, the combustion air shutoff system 86 serves two functions during firing of the water heater. First, in the event that extraneous flammable vapors are drawn into the combustion chamber 18 and begin to burn on the top side of the arrestor plate 24, the temperature in the combustion chamber 18 will rise to a level at which the

combustion chamber heat melts the eutectic disc 120 (or the eutectic disc 120a as the case may be), thereby permitting the compressed spring 92 to upwardly drive the rod 98 (or the rod 122 as the case may be) through the associated collar 108 or 108a until the damper plate member 88 reaches its
5 dashed line closed position shown in FIG. 2 in which the damper plate member 88 closes the bottom pan wall opening 62 and terminates further combustion air delivery to the burner 32 via the combustion air flow path extending from the pre-filter openings 79 to the arrestor plate openings 30. Such termination of combustion air delivery to the combustion
10 chamber shuts down the main and pilot gas burners 32 and 40. As the rod 98 is spring-driven upwardly after the eutectic disc 120 melts (see the dotted line position of the rod 98 in FIG. 2), the lower end projections 104 on the rod 98 prevent it from being shot upwardly through and out of the collar 108 into the combustion chamber 18. Similar projections formed on
15 the alternate hollow rod 122 perform this same function.

The specially designed combustion air shutoff system 86 also serves to terminate burner operation when the eutectic disc 120 (or 120a) is exposed to and melted by an elevated combustion chamber temperature indicative of the generation within the combustion chamber 18 of an
20 undesirably high concentration of carbon monoxide created by clogging of the pre-filter screen structure 78 and/or the arrestor plate openings 30. Preferably, the collar portion 108 of the temperature sensing structure 100 is positioned horizontally adjacent a peripheral portion of the main burner 32 (see FIG. 2) so that the burner flame "droop" (see the dotted line
25 position of the main burner flame 52) created by such clogging more quickly melts the eutectic disc 120 (or the eutectic disc 120a as the case may be).

An upper end portion of a second alternate embodiment 100b of the previously described eutectic temperature sensing structure 100 (see FIG. 4) is cross-sectionally illustrated in FIG. 10. For ease in comparison between the temperature sensing structures 100,100b components in the temperature sensing structure 100b similar to those in the temperature sensing structure 100 have been given identical reference numerals with the subscript "b". The eutectic temperature sensing structure 100b is substantially identical in operation to the temperature sensing structure 100, but is structurally different in that in the temperature sensing structure 100b the metal rod 98b has an annular groove 144 formed in its upper end and receiving an inner edge portion of an annular eutectic alloy member 146.

As illustrated in FIG. 10, an outer annular peripheral edge portion of the eutectic member 146 projects outwardly beyond the side of the rod 98b and underlies an annular crimp 148 formed on the upper end of the tubular collar member 108b. Crimp 148 overlies and upwardly blocks the outwardly projecting annular edge portion of the eutectic member 146, thereby precluding the rod 98b from being spring-driven upwardly past its FIG. 10 position relative to the collar member 108b. However, when the eutectic member 146 is melted it no longer precludes such upward movement of the rod 98b, and the rod 98b is spring-driven upwardly relative to the collar 108b as illustrated by the arrow

An upper end portion of a third alternate embodiment 100c of the previously described eutectic temperature sensing structure 100 (see FIG. 4) is cross-sectionally illustrated in FIG. 11. For ease in comparison between the temperature sensing structures 100,100c components in the temperature sensing structure 100c similar to those in the temperature sensing structure 100 have been given identical reference numerals with

the subscript "c". The eutectic temperature sensing structure 100c is substantially identical in operation to the temperature sensing structure 100, but is structurally different in that in the temperature sensing structure 100c an annular eutectic alloy member 152 is captively retained
5 between the upper end of the rod 98c and the enlarged head portion 154 of a threaded retaining member 156 extended downwardly through the center of the eutectic member 152 and threaded into a suitable opening 158 formed in the upper end of the rod 98c.

As illustrated in FIG. 11, an annularly crimped upper end portion 160
10 of the tubular collar 108c upwardly overlies and blocks an annular outer peripheral portion of the eutectic member 152, thereby precluding upward movement of the rod 98c and the fastener 156 upwardly beyond their FIG. 11 positions relative to the collar 108c. However, when the eutectic member 152 is melted the rod 98c and fastener 156 are free to be
15 spring-driven upwardly relative to the collar 108c as indicated by the arrow 162 in FIG. 11.

An upper end portion of a fourth alternate embodiment 100d of the previously described eutectic temperature sensing structure 100 (see FIG. 4) is cross-sectionally illustrated in FIG. 12. For ease in comparison between
20 the temperature sensing structures 100, 100d components in the temperature sensing structure 100dc similar to those in the temperature sensing structure 100 have been given identical reference numerals with the subscript "d". The eutectic temperature sensing structure 100dc is substantially identical in operation to the temperature sensing structure
25 100, but is structurally different in that a transverse circular bore 164 is formed through the rod 98d adjacent its upper end, the bore 164 complementarily receiving a cylindrical eutectic alloy member 166.

A pair of metal balls 168, each sized to move through the interior of the bore 164, partially extend into the opposite ends of the bore 164 and are received in partially spherical indentations 170 formed in the opposite ends of the eutectic member 166. An annular crimped upper end portion 172 of the collar 108d upwardly overlies and blocks the portions of the balls 168 that project outwardly beyond the side of the rod 98a, thereby precluding upward movement of the rod 98d from its FIG. 12 position relative to the collar 108d. However, when the eutectic member 166 is melted, the upward spring force on the rod 98d causes the crimped area 172 to force the balls 168 toward one another through the bore 164, as indicated by the arrows 174 in FIG. 12, thereby permitting the rod 98d to be upwardly driven from its FIG. 12 position relative to the collar 108d as illustrated by the arrow 176 in FIG. 12.

According to another feature of the present invention, (1) the opening area-to-total area ratios of the pre-filter screen structure 78 and the arrestor plate 24, (2) the ratio of the total open area in the pre-filter screen structure 78 to the total open area in the arrestor plate 24, and (3) the melting point of the eutectic material 120 (or 120a, 146, 152 or 166 as the case may be) are correlated in a manner such that the rising combustion temperature in the combustion chamber 18 caused by a progressively greater clogging of the pre-filter openings 79 and the arrestor plate openings 30 (by, for example, airborne material such as lint) melts the eutectic material 120 and trips the temperature sensing structure 100 and corresponding air shutoff damper closure before a predetermined maximum carbon monoxide concentration level (representatively about 200-400 ppm by volume) is reached within the combustion chamber 18 due to a reduced flow of combustion air into the combustion chamber. The pre-filter area 78 and the array of arrestor plate

openings 30 are also sized so that some particulate matter is allowed to pass through the pre-filter area and come to rest on the arrestor plate. This relative sizing assures that combustion air will normally flow inwardly through the pre-filter area as opposed to being blocked by particulate matter trapped only by the pre-filter area.

In developing the present invention it has been found that a preferred "matching" of the pre-filter structure to the perforated arrestor plate area, which facilitates the burner shutoff before an undesirable concentration of CO is generated within the combustion chamber 18 during firing of the burner 32, is achieved when (1) the ratio of the open area-to-total area percentage of the pre-filter structure 78 to the open area-to-total area percentage of the arrestor plate 24 is within the range of from about 1.2 to about 2.5, and (2) the ratio of the total open area of the pre-filter structure 78 to the total open area of the arrestor plate 24 is within the range of from about 2.5 to about 5.3. The melting point of the eutectic portion of the temperature sensing structure 100 may, of course, be appropriately correlated to the determinable relationship in a given water heater among the operational combustion chamber temperature, the quantity of combustion air being flowed into the combustion chamber, and the ppm concentration level of carbon monoxide being generated within the combustion chamber during firing of the burner 32.

By way of illustration and example only, the water heater 10 illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2 representatively has a tank capacity of 50 gallons of water; an arrestor plate diameter of 20 inches; and a burner firing rate of between 40,000 and 45,000 BTUH. The total area of the square perforated arrestor plate section 28 (see FIG. 3) is 118.4 square inches, and the actual flow area defined by the perforations 30 in the square area 28 is 26.8 square inches. The overall area of the jacket pre-filter structure 78 is

234 square inches, and the actual flow area defined by the openings in the structure 78 is 119.4 square inches. The ratio of the hydraulic diameter of the arrestor openings 30 to the thickness of the arrestor plate 24 is within the range of from about 0.75 to about 1.25, and is preferably about 1.0, and the melting point of the eutectic material in the temperature sensing structure 100 is within the range of from about 425 degrees F to about 465 degrees F, and is preferably about 430 degrees F.

Cross-sectionally illustrated in simplified form in FIG. 9, is a bottom side portion of a first alternate embodiment 10a of the previously described gas-fired water heater 10. For ease in comparing the water heater embodiments 10 and 10a, components in the embodiment 10a similar to those in the embodiment 10 have been given the same reference numerals, but with the subscripts "a".

The water heater 10a is identical to the previously described water heater 10 with the exceptions that in the water heater 10a (1) the pre-filter screen area 78 carried by the jacket 70 in the water heater 10 is eliminated and replaced by a subsequently described structure, (2) the lower end 82a of the jacket 70a is disposed just below the bottom end 80a of the insulation 74a instead of extending clear down to the bottom end 22a of the water heater 10a, and (3) the shallow bottom pan 84 utilized in the water heater 10 is replaced in the water heater 10a with a considerably deeper bottom jacket pan 128 which is illustrated in FIGS. 5-8.

Bottom jacket pan 128 is representatively of a one piece molded plastic construction (but could be of a different material and/or construction if desired) and has an annular vertical sidewall portion 130, a solid circular bottom wall 132, and an open upper end bordered by an upwardly opening annular groove 134 (see FIGS. 8 and 9). Formed in the sidewall portion 130 are (1) a bottom drain fitting 136, (2) a burner access

opening 138 (which takes the place of the access opening 38 in the water heater 10), (3) a series of pre-filter air inlet openings 140 (which take the place of the pre-filter openings 79 in the water heater 10), and (4) a holder structure 142 for a depressible button portion (not shown) of a piezo igniter structure associated with the main burner portion of the water heater 10a.

As best illustrated in FIG. 9, the annular skirt 20a extends downwardly through the interior of the pan 128, with the bottom skirt end 27a resting on the bottom pan wall 132, and the now much higher annular lower end 82a of the jacket 70a being closely received in the annular groove 134 extending around the top end of the pan structure 128. The use of this specially designed one piece bottom jacket pan 128 desirably reduces the overall cost of the water heater 10a and simplifies its construction.

Perspectively illustrated in simplified form in FIG. 13 is a bottom end portion of a second alternate embodiment 10b of the previously described gas-fired water heater 10. For ease in comparing the water heater embodiments 10 and 10b, components in the embodiment 10b similar to those in the embodiment 10 have been given the same reference numerals, but with the subscripts "b".

The water heater 10b is identical to the previously described water heater 10 with the exception that in the water heater 10b the previously described pre-filter screen area 78 carried by the jacket 70 in the water heater 10 (see FIGS. 1 and 2) is eliminated and replaced by a circumferentially spaced series of specially designed, molded plastic perforated pre-filtering panels 178 which are removably snapped into corresponding openings in a lower end portion of the outer jacket structure 70b of the water heater 10b.

With reference now to FIGS. 14-18, each of the molded plastic perforated pre-filter panels 178 has a rectangular frame 180 that borders a rectangular, horizontally curved perforated air pre-filtering plate 182. Each panel 178 may be removably snapped into a corresponding rectangular opening 184 (see FIGS. 16-18) using resiliently deflectable retaining tabs 186 formed on the inner side of the frame 180 and adapter to inwardly overlies the jacket 70b at spaced locations around the periphery of the jacket opening 184 as shown in FIGS. 16-18.

Formed on a bottom end portion of the inner side of each frame 180 is an upstanding shield plate 188 which is inwardly spaced apart from the frame 180 and forms with a bottom side portion thereof a horizontally extending trough 190 (see FIGS. 16 and 18) having opposite open ends 192 (see FIGS. 15 and 16). As illustrated in FIGS. 15, 16 and 18, a horizontally spaced plurality of reinforcing tabs 194 project outwardly from the inner side of the shield plate 188.

As illustrated in FIG. 18, a top end portion of each installed pre-filter panel 178 contacts an inwardly adjacent portion of the overall insulation structure 74b, thereby bracing a portion of the jacket 70b against undesirable inward deflection adjacent the upper end of opening 184. At the bottom end of each installed pre-filter panel 178, the arcuate outer side edges of the reinforcing tabs 194 are normally spaced slightly outwardly from the skirt structure 20b. However, if a bottom end portion of the panel 178 and an adjacent portion of the jacket 70b are deflected inwardly toward the skirt structure 20b, the tabs 194 (as shown in FIG. 18) are brought to bear against the skirt structure 20b and serve to brace and reinforce the adjacent portion of the jacket 70b against further inward deflection thereof.

The shield plate portion 188 of each pre-filter panel 178 uniquely functions to prevent liquid splashed against a lower outer side portion of the installed panel 178 from simply traveling through the plate perforations and coming into contact with the skirt 20b and the air inlet openings therein. Instead, such splashed liquid comes into contact with the outer side of the shield plate 188, drains downwardly therealong into the trough 190, and spills out of the open trough ends 192 without coming into contact with the skirt 194.

Cross-sectionally illustrated in FIG. 19 is a bottom portion of the water heater 10 in which the previously described eutectic-based temperature sensing structure 100 (see FIGS. 1 and 2) has been replaced with a specially designed heat frangible temperature sensing structure 200, further details of which are shown in FIGS. 20-25. As later described herein, the temperature sensing structure 200 includes a heat frangible element 202 which is positioned above the upper end of the rod 98 and serves to block its upward movement from its solid line position in FIG. 19 to its dotted line position, thereby blockingly retaining the shutoff damper 88 in its solid line open position shown in FIG. 19.

With reference now to FIGS. 19 and 20, the frangible element 202 is disposed in the interior of the combustion chamber 18 and is carried in a frame structure 204 which is secured as later described to the top side of arrestor plate 24 adjacent the gas burner 32. The rod 98 slidably extends upwardly through a hole (not shown) in the arrestor plate 24, with the upper end of the rod being associated with the balance of the temperature sensing structure 200 as also later described herein.

Turning now to FIGS. 20-25, the frame structure 204 includes two primary parts - a base portion 206 and a support portion 208. The base portion 206 (see FIG. 24) has an elongated rectangular base or bottom wall

210 with front and rear side edges 212,214 and upturned left and right end tabs 216,218. A slot 220 horizontally extends forwardly through the rear edge of the left end tab 216 and has a vertically enlarged front end portion 222, and a slot 224 horizontally extends rearwardly through the front edge of the right end tab 218 and has a vertically enlarged rear end portion 226. As shown in FIG. 24, the end tabs 216,218 are in a facing relationship with one another, and are spaced apart along an axis 228.

A pair of circular mounting holes 230 extend through the bottom wall 210, with screws 232 or other suitable fastening members (see FIG. 20) extending downwardly through holes 230 and anchoring the bottom wall 210 to the top side of the arrestor plate 24. A somewhat larger diameter circular hole 234 extends through the bottom wall 210 between the holes 230. As shown in phantom in FIG. 24, the rod 98 extends upwardly through the corresponding hole (not visible) in the arrestor plate 24, and hole 234 that overlies the arrestor plate hole. In FIG. 24, the rod 98 is illustratively shown in its uppermost position (corresponding to the dotted line closed position of the damper 88 shown in FIG. 19) in which the top end of the rod 98 is positioned higher than the tab slots 220 and 224.

With reference now to FIGS. 20, 22, 24 and 25, the frame support portion 208 has an elongated rectangular horizontal bottom wall 236 with opposite front and rear side edges 238,240. A central front tab 242 having a rectangular slot 244 extending therethrough projects upwardly from the front side edge 238 across from an elongated central rear tab 246 that rearwardly projects past the rear side edge 240 of the bottom wall 236 and has an upturned outer end 248. Just inwardly of opposite left and right end portions 250,252 of the bottom wall 236 are horizontally spaced elongated rectangular bars 254,256 that longitudinally extend upwardly from adjacent the rear side edge of the bottom wall 236, on opposite

sides of the rear tab 246, and are joined at their top ends by a horizontal top wall 258 having a circular hole 260 centrally disposed therein.

The opposite end portions 250,252 of the bottom wall 236 are spaced apart along an axis 262. A central circular opening 264 (see FIG. 22) extends
5 downwardly through the bottom wall 236 and is bordered by a depending annular collar 266 (see FIG. 25). The opening 264 and collar 266 are sized to slidably receive the rod 98 as later described herein. The central opening 264 is disposed between two installation openings 268 extending downwardly through the bottom wall 236.

10 With reference now to FIG. 21, the frangible element 202 has a hollow body portion in the form of a generally tubular glass bulb 270 which is filled with a fluid, representatively peanut oil 272, which has a boiling point higher than the set point temperature of the temperature sensing structure 200 (representatively the same set point temperature of
15 the previously described eutectic-based temperature sensing structure 100) and a flash point temperature substantially above the predetermined set point temperature. Other suitable fluids include, by way of example and not in a limiting manner, mineral oil or a suitable assembly lubricant such as Proeco 46 assembly lubricant as manufactured and sold by Cognis
20 Corporation, 8150 Holton Drive, Florence, Kentucky 41042.

The frangible element 202 is constructed in a manner causing it to shatter in response to exposure to the set point temperature within the combustion chamber 18. Illustratively, the peanut oil 272 is placed in the bulb 270 (before the sealing off of the bulb) in an assembly environment
25 at a temperature slightly below the set point temperature of the temperature sensing structure 200. Bulb 270 is then suitably sealed, and the frangible element 202 is permitted to come to room temperature for subsequent incorporation in the temperature sensing structure 200.

Representatively, the bulb 270 has generally spherical upper and lower end portions 274,276 and a substantially smaller diameter tubular portion 278 projecting axially downwardly from its lower end portion 276.

5 In addition to the previously described rod, frangible element and frame portions 98, 202 and 204 of the temperature sensing structure 200, the temperature sensing structure 200 further includes a small sheet metal spring member 280 (see FIGS. 20 and 23-25). Spring member 280 has a generally rectangular bottom wall 282 with a front end tab 284, and a downwardly curved top wall 286 which is joined at area 288 to the rear
10 edge of the bottom wall 282 and overlies the top side of the bottom wall 282. Top wall 286 has a central circular hole 290 therein, and a front end edge portion 292 which is closely adjacent a portion of the top side of the bottom wall 282 inwardly adjacent the tab 284.

With the rod 98 extending upwardly through its corresponding
15 opening in the arrestor plate 24 (see FIG. 24) and in its upper limit position, the balance of the temperature sensing system 200 is operatively installed as follows. The base portion 206 of the frame structure 204 is lowered onto the top side of the arrestor plate 24 in a manner causing an upper end portion of the rod 98 to pass upwardly through the circular hole 234
20 in the bottom wall 210 of the base portion 206. The base portion 206 is then anchored to the top side of the arrestor plate 24 by operatively extending the fasteners 232 (see FIG. 20) downwardly through the bottom wall openings 230 into the arrestor plate 24.

Spring 280 is placed atop a central portion of the bottom wall 236 of
25 the frame support portion 208, between the tabs 242 and 248 (see FIGS. 24 and 25) in a manner such that the bottom spring wall 282 overlies the top side of the bottom wall 236 and blocks the central opening 264 therein (see FIG. 22), and the spring tab 284 extends outwardly through the front

tab slot 244. The heat-frangible element 202 is then snapped into place between the top frame support portion wall 258 and the top spring wall 286 (see FIGS. 24 and 25), thereby resiliently pressing the heat-frangible element 202 between the frame and spring walls 258 and 286.

5 This installation of the heat-frangible element 202 is illustratively accomplished by first downwardly inserting the bottom frangible element projection 278 through the opening 290 in the top spring wall 286 (see FIG. 23), depressing the top spring wall 286, tilting the upper bulb end 274 of the element 202 to position it under the top frame wall opening 260, and
10 then releasing the element 202. This causes the vertically oriented element 202 (see FIGS. 20, 24 and 25) to be resiliently pressed between the spring 280 and the top frame wall 258, with the bottom bulb projection 278 captively retained within the top spring wall hole 290 (see FIG. 23), and a small portion of the top bulb end portion 274 extending into the top
15 frame wall opening 260.

The assembled element, frame and spring portions 202,208,280 form a thermal trigger subassembly 294 (see FIGS. 24 and 25) which is releasably secured to the in-place frame base portion 206 using a suitable tool 296 shown in phantom in FIG. 24. As depicted in FIG. 24, tool 296 has a
20 horizontally oriented cylindrical handle portion 298 from which a longitudinally spaced pair of drive rods 300,302 transversely project in a downward direction parallel to a vertical axis 304. Lower end portions 300a,302a of the rods 300,302 (configured for receipt in the bottom wall openings 268) have laterally reduced cross-sections which create
25 downwardly facing shoulders 300b,302b on the rods 300,302 at the tops of the lower end portions 300a,302a.

To install the thermal trigger subassembly 294 on the in-place frame base portion 206, the bottom wall 236 of the frame support portion 208 is

positioned atop the rod 98 in a manner such that the upper end of the rod 98 passes upwardly through the annular collar 266 (see FIG. 25) and bears against the bottom side of the bottom spring wall 282, and the axis 262 is at an angle to the axis 228, with the bottom wall end portion 252 being positioned forwardly of the front side edge 212 of the bottom frame wall 210, and the bottom wall end portion 250 being positioned rearwardly of the rear side edge 214 of the bottom frame wall 219.

With an operator grasping the tool handle 298, the lower tool rod ends 300a,302a are then placed in the openings 268 of the bottom wall 236 of the frame support portion 208 in a manner causing the rod shoulders 300b,302b to bear against the top side of the bottom wall 236. The tool 296 is then forced downwardly to drive the thermal trigger subassembly 294 downwardly toward the bottom wall 210 of the frame base portion 206, depressing the rod 98 against the resilient upward force of the damper spring 92 (see FIG. 19), until the bottom wall 236 of the frame support portion 208 is vertically brought to the level of the slots 220,224 in the vertical end tabs 216,218.

The tool 296 is then rotated in a counterclockwise direction (as viewed from above) about the vertical axis 304, as indicated by the arrow 306 in FIG. 24, to cause the end portions 250,252 of the bottom wall 236 of the frame support portion 208 to be respectively rotated into the end tab slots 220,224 and underlie the top side edges of their vertically enlarged portions 222,226. Tool 296 is then lifted out of engagement with the bottom wall 236 to thereby permit the damper spring 92, via the rod 98) to drive the bottom wall end portions 250,252 upwardly against the top side edges of the slot portions 222,226 and thereby captively retain the end portions 250,252 within the slots 220,224 and bring the temperature sensing structure 200 to its fully assembled state depicted in FIG. 20, with

the rod 98 upwardly bearing against the bottom wall 282 of the spring 280 (see FIG. 23), and the heat frangible element 202 blockingly preventing the rod 98 from moving upwardly from its illustrated position in which the shutoff damper 88 is in its solid line open position shown in FIG. 19.

5 If the set point temperature within the combustion chamber 18 (for example, 430 degrees F) is reached, the bulb 270 shatters and unblocks the upper end of the rod 98, permitting the damper spring 92 to upwardly drive the rod 98, as indicated by the arrow 308 in FIG. 20A, to its upper limit position shown in FIG. 20a. This causes the rod 98 to eject the spring
10 280 from the frame 204, and the shutoff damper 88 to be driven by spring 92 to its dotted line closed position shown in FIG. 19.

To subsequently reset the combustion air shutoff system 86 after this occurs, the frame support portion 208 is simply removed from the underlying frame base portion 206, and another heat-frangible element
15 202 and spring 280 are installed in the frame support portion 208 to form the previously described thermal trigger subassembly 294 which is then reinstalled on the underlying frame base portion 206 as also previously described.

The heat-frangible temperature sensing structure 200 provides
20 several advantages over the eutectic-based temperature sensing structures previously described herein. For example, the glass bulb 270 is chemically inert and not subject to thermal creep. Additionally, the temperature sensing structure 200, due to its assembly configuration, is easy to reset if the need arises to do so. Moreover, due to the method
25 used to construct the heat-frangible element 202 it is easier to precisely manufacture-in a given trigger or set point temperature of the temperature sensing structure 200.